

**Central Falls School District
Board of Trustees
Minutes**

December 13, 2005

I. Call to Order:

The Central Falls School District Board of Trustees meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m by Chairperson, Mr. Robert Canavan.

Present were: Mr. Robert Canavan, Chairperson

Mr. Gus Silva

Ms. Mary Lou Perez

Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado

Mr. Joel Roseman

Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales

Mr. Joseph Faria (Excused to arrive late- 7:17 pm)

II. Public Comments:

Attorney Mr. Piccirilli informed Board members of the Open Meeting Law reiterated by Attorney General Patrick Lynch. In short, this references the fact that meetings must adhere to and follow only those items that appear on the agenda and that Board members do

not respond to or address comments made during the Public Comment portion of the meeting that do not reference agenda items.

Mr. Robert Charette, a parent, expressed his concerns regarding the December 9th, 2005 snow storm. Mr. Charette stated that this was an issue of student safety and as such school should have been cancelled or students dismissed earlier in the day.

In her response to Mr. Charette, Dr. Watkins ensured him that she also is concerned about student safety. Dr. Watkins also informed Mr. Charette that the decision not to cancel school because of weather conditions is based upon weather reports and forecasts as well as a discussion with area superintendents beginning at 4:30 am. In addition, information from other sources including the District's Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, the Central Falls School Police and Public Works Departments are also sought and considered prior to any decision being made. Given the weather forecast for December 9th, the severest part of the storm was to end by noon. Based on information from all these sources as well as the fact weather conditions do change without prior notice, school was not cancelled. Also, dismissing children earlier could have created more of a safety issue.

Mrs. Kathy Bradshaw, Secretary at the Registration Center and a Central Falls resident for 17 years, expressed her concern and disagreement about the bilingual requirement on some of the school

district's job postings. Mrs. Bradshaw felt that because of this requirement her chances of advancing can be jeopardized.

Ms. Hope Evanoff, a French Teacher at High School, spoke about the class trip to France. She gave out permission slips to Board members for their review.

Mr. Canavan asked Ms. Evanoff if she had a formal letter that parents would be required to sign. Ms. Evanoff responded 'Yes'.

Mr. Felix Estrada, President of the PTO at the high school raised the issue about the problems involving Central Falls High School students and Pawtucket students. He would like to begin working with each school district to resolve these problems. Mr. Estrada also addressed the overcrowding conditions at the high school as a huge and serious issue. He wonders if we can purchase land or a building to resolve overcrowding.

Mr. Estrada also mentioned that he has received good input from parents about Dr. Watkins' performance. He concluded by saying that all of us need to work together to produce the best students and to give them the best education possible.

Deborah, a parent at Veterans Elementary School, said that she was at the meeting to support Dr. Watkins and her staff. She said that Dr. Watkins is an asset to the School District.

III. Current Business:

Mr. Joseph Faria motioned to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2005 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joel Roseman and unanimously approved by the Board (7-0).

Mr. Roseman asked members to review the schedule of bills and respond by Thursday, December 15. Mr. Faria asked for more time and suggested that the members have until Wednesday, December 21. A motion to extend the approval of bills was made by Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales and seconded by Ms. Mary Lou Perez. Members voted 4-3 in favor of postponing the approval of the schedule of bills to Wednesday December 21.

Communications:

Resignations: Mrs. Sue Levasseur, Secretary in the Superintendent's Office, submitted her resignation letter, effective December 21, 2005.

Mr. Canavan suggested to Dr. Watkins that it would be very helpful if an exit

interview with Mrs. Levasseur could be conducted. Mr. Kevin Clement, Director of Human Resources, mentioned that an interview with Mrs. Levasseur was conducted and that it has become the practice of the Human Resource Department to hold such interviews for all employees.

Retirements: The following staff members submitted letters of retirement:

- Ms. Clara McCallum, teacher assistant at Veterans Memorial School, effective November 22, 2005.
- Ms. Deb Bizier, teacher assistant at Central Falls High School, effective December 31, 2005.
- Mr. John Zajchowski, assistant principal at Calcutt Middle School, effective December 29, 2005

Ms. Perez requested to place these letters on file. Mr. Roseman seconded the motion and so it was voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

Board of Trustees Committee Reports:

Vacancies for Board of Trustees Members: Mr. Canavan updated the Board members about the selection process for replacing two (2) Board members (Mr. Faria and Mr. Silva). Mr. Canavan informed the Board that Mr. Keith Oliveira from the Department of Education will be assisting in this process. Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales inquired as to why

Mr. Oliveira was involved. Mr. Canavan stated that Mr. Oliveira would be helpful in assisting in the process.

Mr. Canavan also suggested that a committee be formed that would evaluate the Superintendent's performance. This will take place in January 2006.

Administrative Report:

Dr. Watkins invited Board members to attend the City Council meeting regarding the mobile classrooms. Some school district administrators met with the City Council and the Council suggested that a committee be organized to further investigate the logistics involving mobile classrooms. The future of this process looks promising.

Enrollment will continue to grow at the high school and the need for additional space is critical and urgent.

In this regard, Ms. Perez asked if we were certain that all the children attending Central Falls schools actually live in Central Falls.

Dr. Watkins mentioned that the school district does have a Truancy Officer who

checks the residency requirement of students. Additionally, all new students enrolling in the school district must present two (2) proofs of residency upon registering. However, for certain students (especially seniors) they can finish their senior year in Central Falls even if they live elsewhere.

Dr. Watkins also mentioned that she would ask the Truancy Officer to review student records and verify the residency requirement.

Mr. Canavan inquired about the status of using the Channel One building for classrooms. Dr. Watkins responded by informing the Board that the cost to remodel the Channel One building would be excessive and that we need to proceed with caution before any decision is reached.

Mr. Canavan also asked if the Channel One building was for sale. Mr. Silva answered 'yes'.

Mr. Roseman asked if, in its present condition, the Channel One building was appropriate and suitable for educational purposes. Mr. Silva responded that renovations to the Channel One building would need to be done and that, he believes, it will be very costly.

Mr. Faria stated that he made a suggestion a while ago that the superintendent work with Mayor Moreau regarding the Channel One building. Mr. Faria continued to state that Dr. Watkins did not follow

up with Mayor Moreau and she is dropping the ball.

Dr. Watkins stated that she spoke with the Mayor prior to the elections and that he suggested that they get together to discuss the Channel One building after the elections. Dr. Watkins also mentioned that this discussion did not happen as of yet.

Regarding the cost associated with the mobile classrooms, Mr. Robert Murray, the school district Business Manager, stated that the city has some cash flow problems that might make it difficult for the city to finance this project. In addition, he mentioned that installing mobile classrooms involve the participation of a number of city and state departments that could delay the completion of this project.

When asked about the Channel One building, Mr. Murray stated that he had spoken to the Finance Director of the city who informed him that Mayor Moreau had decided to sell Channel One to alleviate cash flow problems. Mr. Murray also stated that the city holds some responsible for providing space for educating the city's children.

Mr. Roseman asked Mr. Murray to supply the Board members with all information and studies pertaining to the issue of space.

Mr. Roseman inquired whether or not the city has any responsibility to pay for the existing space needs of the district. In response, Mr. Faria answered, 'No'. He also stated that the city is not in the position to assume additional expenses and the city taxpayers can not provide this kind of assistance.

Dr. Todd Flaherty, the Deputy Commissioner of Education, noted that Dr. Watkins and Mr. Murray have done a good job at attempting to resolve a difficult and complex situation. They have kept the city informed along the way.

Mr. Faria suggested that the Board meet with Mayor Moreau.

Mr. Silva stated that the City Council is very willing to work with the school department.

Mr. Canavan noted that he would call Mayor Moreau in regards to the Channel One building and he would report back to the Board members at the January meeting.

Administrative Report:

Recognition of Staff: The high school football team and coaches for winning the state championship.

Personnel Matters:

Dr. Watkins recommended that the following appointments be made:

- Mr. Christopher Cruz, temporary teacher assistant, district wide, effective January 3, 2006.**
- Ms. Manuela Raposa, Coordinator, Community, Schools and Families Partnerships, district wide, effective December 12, 2005.**
- Ms. Maria Gomes, temporary teacher assistant, district wide, effective December 12, 2005.**
- Mrs. Danielle Delforno-Waugh, Reading Specialist, Central Falls High School, effective December 8, 2005.**
- Mr. Michael Cohen, (52 weeks) Interpreter/Translator, Student Services, effective December 6, 2005.**
- Ms. Ana Gomez, Interpreter/Translator, (52 weeks) Student Services, effective December 6, 2005.**
- Ms. Christine Pepin, temporary bus monitor, transportation, effective November 29, 2005.**
- Mr. Michael Churchill, Lunch Aide, Calcutt Middle School, effective November 21, 2005.**

Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales asked what had happened with the Speech

Pathologist. Mr. Clement responded that the position was already offered to someone.

Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales motioned to accept the personnel recommendations. The motioned was seconded by Mr. Silva, so it was voted 7-0 in favor of the recommendations.

Resignations:

Mrs. Sue Levasseur, Secretary in the Superintendent's Office, submitted her letter of resignation, effective December 21, 2005

Mr. Faria inquired if this position was going to be filled. Dr. Watkins answered 'Yes' and that a replacement will be sought.

Mr. Canavan asked if Sue's resignation had anything to do with realignment. Dr. Watkins responded 'No'. Mr. Canavan also asked for a clarification regarding Mrs. Levasseur's job description. He asked if she was the Superintendent's Secretary. Dr. Watkins replied, 'No'.

A discussion about Mrs. Levasseur's resignation followed. Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales suggested that this is a personnel matter and should be discussed during the Executive Session not at the public meeting.

A motion to discuss this matter during Executive Session was made by Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales and seconded by Mr. Silva. It was voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

Retirements:

The following staff members submitted letters of retirement:

- Ms. Clara McCallum, teacher assistant at Veterans Memorial School, effective November 22, 2005.**
- Ms. Deb Bizier, teacher assistant at Central Falls High School, effective December 31, 2005.**
- Mr. John Zajchowski, assistant principle of the Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle School, effective December 29, 2005.**

A motion to approve was made by Mrs. Ana Cano-Morales and seconded by Ms. Perez. It as voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

IV. New Business:

In September of 2004, the Annenberg Institute conducted a study of the Central Falls

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School District. The findings of this study were collected and analyzed and presented to the Board.

Mr. Frank Barnes, Senior Associate from the Annenberg Institute, presented the findings of the CORE Review that took place during the 2004-2005 school year.

Mr. Roseman inquired about what would follow from this report. Dr. Watkins responded that a review of the recommendations will take place and strategies will be developed to improve on those areas, for example, communication concerns and issues.

Mr. Roseman suggested that these items be brought up at the next Board meeting so that the members will be updated and informed.

Mr. Canavan thanked Mr. Barnes for the presentation and recommendations.

V. Discussion:

High School Update:

Staff at the high school is working diligently.

Dr. Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner of Education, noted the great job the Annenberg Institute did in assessing the district. He also mentioned that there is a hopeful tone to the high school situation even though there were some unfortunate situations that took place at the beginning of the school year. Dr. Flaherty continued to say that

the Superintendent was hired to move things forward and now we can expect more from teachers, parents and students. Rhode Island has a high rate of accountability. Dr. Flaherty commends staff and administration for their hard work.

Dr. Flaherty presented an update on the status of the high school and the Corrective Action plan.

Mr. Roseman asked Dr. Flaherty if the Corrective Action plan could be reviewed by the Board. Dr. Flaherty said that this is a public document.

Mr. Faria mentioned the fact that the school district has excellent teachers and programs. He also stated that they want to get through this but it is not being done because they need some guidance.

Truancy Policy:

Dr. Watkins suggested that the Board review the Truancy Policy and Weather Policy and approve them at the next meeting.

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In regards to policies and procedures, Attorney Piccirilli suggested to the Board that they develop policies and procedures regarding finances.

VII. Executive Session:

At 9:15 pm a motion was made by Mr. Roseman to move to Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado. A roll call vote was taken and so it was voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

Public Meeting Reconvened:

Mr. Canavan reconvened the public meeting at 9:41 p.m.

VII. Adjourn:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Perez and seconded by Mr. Silva. The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 pm.